



Lewis & Clark Public Health

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Flu Picking Up Steam in County; Still Not Too Late for Flu Shot

Lewis and Clark County has seen another big jump in the number of reported flu cases in the past week, according to local health officials.

Since March 1, 52 new cases of influenza, or flu, have been reported to Lewis and Clark Public Health. That brings the total for this season to 161 cases – 84 percent of them since Feb. 1, according to Karen Dobson Wandel, public health nurse supervisor. Seven have been hospitalized, including two children.

The number of confirmed cases is often “only the tip of the iceberg,” she added, since not all people with the flu seek medical care.

Wandel strongly encouraged people to stay home if they’re sick to help stop the spread of the severe respiratory illness. For those who aren’t sick, she suggested taking preventive measures like washing hands often, covering coughs and sneezes, and disinfecting shared surfaces, like desks, tables, and countertops.

Wandel said a flu shot might still benefit those who haven’t been vaccinated this season. Last year, Lewis and Clark County saw flu cases into May. The shot takes about two weeks to become effective and costs less than prescription medicines to treat flu.

The flu season generally runs from October through March, although this season has been fairly quiet until January.

Public health officials recommend an annual flu shot for everyone over 6 months of age.

The health department offers flu shots Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays from 11 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at 1930 Ninth Avenue. No appointment is needed, and the department bills all insurance providers. A reduced fee is available for those who have a low income or no insurance.